

MAGONIA Supplement

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MOON ROOF OPTIONAL

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IT IS a starry summer evening about twelve miles from Paris in 1950. An ex-pilot who runs the Bar de l'Escadrille near the airport takes a stroll before going to bed. He hears a whistling like the wind and turns to see two flying saucers have landed a few hundred feet nearby. They are each 16 feet in diameter, four and a half feet high in the centre, and all round their edges are little oblong windows. Thick oval doors open and out steps one man from each saucer. They are five and a half feet tall, have brown hair, and wear flying suits that, in the darkness, seem dark brown or dark blue.

They both run to a point on one of the machines where a rod running from the centre of the disc to the edge needs to be reset or replaced. The rod has a rubber pad at the end and is one of many that lie about eight inches apart around the machine. The witness remarked that the repair was done "with naked hands, without any tools". He walked up to them and asked if they had had a breakdown. They were briefly startled, but calmly indicated, "Yes, but it will soon be all right". This was said very slowly, but in accurate French.

The repair was done quickly in roughly a minute. The men opened the doors again and a blinding light came from the interior. The witness emphasised, "the light was the most perfect I had ever seen". He could see no source to it and he saw no shadows. Sitting at the centre of the craft was a red leather dentist's chair. Above this was "a very large kind of oval steering wheel, with a handle at each extremity. It was all metal and covered in signs and switches. To the front of the chair was something like a wireless set with seven or eight knobs. There were also several other pieces of apparatus around the chair on pedestals. The witness tried to engage the pilot in conversation and asked him about "the uses of the many knobs on the instrument-board". He answered back, "Power". (1)

A few seconds later the doors on each saucer closed. From the outside the machine appeared weightless and hung four or five inches above the ground. It looked like aluminium to him. The holes along the edge of the craft lit up and the machines took off at tremendous speed accompanied only by a sound like the wind. The witness, however, felt nothing. He decided against telling anyone and noticed the next day that there was not the slightest evidence that anything had happened. The grass was not flattened, reinforcing the impression there had been no landing-gear. (2)

This story was told to French ufologist Jimmy Guieu and a producer on Radio Monte Carlo, Fernand Carlo, some time in the early 1950s. Guieu emphasises that the interview took place before George Adamski's book *Flying Saucers Have Landed* had gone to press. This was to allay concerns that similar details like the craft hanging above the ground could not have been gleaned from that source. Guieu's book had been written and revised by January 1954 and this places an upper limit for the appearance of this saucer repair case. It is not the first repair case of the saucer era - the April 1950 Bruno Facchini case predates it - but it is near the head of a rather long line of such encounters.

Here, we are not dealing with distant points of light and matters of interpretation. There are no issues of illusion, misidentification, and honest mistakes in a case like this. The witness talked with a guy who spoke back in good French and took off in a flying saucer only a few feet

in front of his eyes. There's no middle ground. The story is either true or completely false. The claimant, Claude Blondeau, had been both a commercial pilot and one with the Air Force and had 1,500 flying hours to his credit. People like that automatically get points for mental stability to have held such positions.

There was very little here to boggle the mind in terms of science. The craft defies gravity, but little else. We get none of the biological absurdities of abduction lore, no switching off of witnesses, no mind rays. There is no appeal to religious or spiritual sensibilities. It is a simple technological tale. An ex-pilot gets a glimpse inside a new flying machine: a leather seat, a steering wheel with switches close at hand, and an array of extras at arm's length. It is so quiet you only hear the wind even at full throttle. And it is so simple you can fix it without tools! A dream car of the air. All we need to know is whether it's a Porsche or Lamborghini.

Looking back on this story with 50 years' distance and perspective forces complications on what had to have looked like an admirably plausible story at the time. All those knobs and switches sounded reasonable in the Fifties but, by the turn of the century, Roswellians began to speak of their crashed saucers having equipment proving they are controlled by mental interfaces. MILAB lore tells of abductees involuntarily enlisted into experiments with these interfaces. (3) Given what we now know about computer technology, mental interfaces are a more logical expectation than a saucer controlled by banks of switches. Given this development, Blondeau's saucer now firmly belongs in antique shows rather than UFO showrooms.

That big old steering wheel at the centre of the saucer is a feature that certainly seems unique among UFO stories. Bullard at least completely missed listing any examples in his study of the craft used in abductions. (4) Offhand, I can't recall seeing one in any contactee stories either. The holes along the rim that light up on take-off seem an odd detail, similar to yet different from the more common feature of jets of flame along the rims of the pinwheeling saucers seen in this period. There is a crude approximation to this style of lighting in one of Budd Hopkins's cases, the 1975 George O'Barski encounter, but if there is a more exact match it evidently was not popular enough to make it into Stacy and Huyghe's recent *Field Guide to UFOs*. (5)

The admission by the man working on the rod that the craft had broken down, but would soon be all right, could be regarded as a doubtful matter. As Kent Jeffrey argued in the context of the implausibility of the Roswell crash, technology seems to get increasingly reliable as time goes by. (6) Shouldn't a sufficiently advanced technology, first, need little or no repair--second, monitor itself to foresee the need for maintenance before failure in flight -- and third, repair itself without human hands, i.e. by mechanical helpers or nano-technology?

One puzzle the story places before a listener is whether we are dealing with an alien craft or secret earth technology. The talk of brown-haired men in dark flight suits invites the presumption of earthly origin. The fact that the man talks good French, but slowly, prefers an inference of training in a foreign language over aliens who would likelier invoke telepathy or other magical analogues. The fact that the craft is single-seater suggests a craft in an early stage of development, and the presence of two allows the thought that one was a spotter chaperoning a newly built copy on a shakedown cruise. With an alien craft, you tend to expect a crew aboard.

Yet there is that detail where Blondeau speaks of a pure light without source or shadow which sounds as if he is exploiting the poetics of religious visions. This is a celestial light, the light of heaven and angelic souls. Too, the weightless character of the craft also defies everyday intuitions about earthly matter. Such quiet defiance of gravity is more in line with spirits and supermen than rocket science. Both these marvels appear elsewhere in contactee lore (7) and abduction lore. (8) They also appear in conjunction with aliens in science fiction literature (9) and science fiction films. (10) Hence they seem more 'right' for an ETH viewpoint.

We might fit the celestial light detail into the secret technology framework by appeal to atomic power. The pure light would allude to radioactivity, reactor glow, and the alchemy of atomic fire. The weightlessness is trickier, but may simply allude to magnetic forces being

harnessed, perhaps as a spin-off from the Manhattan Project or from cyclotron work on particle physics. The more desperate ETH advocates may, however, choose to argue that the appearance of these details in other UFO reports points to shared alien reality. There was no secret saucer technology on earth in 1950 capable of accounting for the Blondeau CE3K and it must be real, given the character of the witness and the validation provided by such identical details.

Without a confession signed in blood, there is probably no hope of convincing diehards that this case is an obvious fiction, but I suspect culture trackers and those worried by that monster steering wheel can be more easily cajoled to appreciate the need for accepting an argument for unreality.

The key to what this story is about, at least to my eye, is the moment when the saucer pilot shrugs off the questions about what the knobs are for and succinctly answers, "Power". This is a handsome moment and to get the full and proper reaction you should not be reading it in a saucer book, but hearing it in the Bar de l'Escadrille. This is a story inspired, shaped, and informed by 'guytalk'. The template is the guys sitting around talking about their cars and the cars of the big guys - racers and high rollers. The talk comes around to one guy telling how he got to get a close look at the sports-machine of one of the big guys. The driver stopped because his 'rod' needed a little adjustment. He wants to chat with him and so asks him about all the eye-popping stuff he sees inside. The big guy is a no-nonsense sort and cuts him short with that single word - Power. It distils down to the essence all he really needs to know. The big guy has it - YOU don't. The listeners at the bar smile, for they understand. Everything with guys is about power. The bigger the engine, the faster the car... It is about being more powerful than the next guy.

What Blondeau's story has done is to lightly transmute the technological

EDITORIAL

Our Editorial in the previous issue provoked an angry response from UFO historian Jerome Clark, on the UFO UpDates mailing list. Here are the more relevant quotes from his message:

"To use an atrocity like the 11 September slaughter to score cheap points against ufologists who presume to disagree with *Magonia's* favored beliefs is, at best, to make oneself look cynical beyond reason and, at worst, to raise questions concerning your sense of moral proportion.

"Though I don't think much of psycho-social ufology, I have always thought well of you, John. I would have expected better. You're making about as much sense as the California pro-gun group that exploited the atrocity to promote its crusade against gun control."

Clark has missed the point, as usual. Atrocities always spark off debates on subjects which have some relevance to them. Massacres by mad gunmen in Britain led to intensive debates about guns, their uses and abuses, and who should be allowed to own and use them, and under what conditions. To suggest that debates about the laws concerning guns, and their relevance to the question of terrorist threats, should be taboo is just humbug.

There is one thing that can confidently be stated about guns, however: they belong to the real world. It is possible to have serious debates and discussions about them. On the other hand, the human-alien hybrids and the crashed saucers at Wright-Patterson AFB belong to the world of fantasy.

Many ufologists evidently have a strong distaste for reality, like Elwood Dowd (James Stewart) in the film *Harvey* (1950), who says: "I've wrestled with reality for 35 years, and I'm happy, doctor, I finally won out over it."

Magonia prefers to face reality, and it does not have any "favored beliefs". Its editors and contributors try to bring a bit of logic, and respect for facts rather than wild speculations, into the mad little world of ufology. Of course this approach makes UFO stories seem rather less interesting than when they are presented by the writers of gee-whiz books and the lecturers at crazy UFO conferences. But ufologists must make their choice. Are they engaged in serious, objective research and debate, or are they just providing a form of popular entertainment?

elements into a futuristic framework. It is the guy-thing taken up the next rung of the technological ladder. The saucer is little more than a sports car with a third dimension. Beyond the steering wheel, reclining leather seat, radio, knobs and switches, we know from the closing scene that it has speed. It goes from zero to zenith in the blink of an eye and does it smoothly: leaving only the sound of the wind. Picture that scene again. The big guy has delivered the word "Power", shuts the door, and speeds straight up into the sky with the whisper of wind. Blondeau has written the perfect commercial for the dream-car of the future. It is just too good to be true.

Regardless of the shape of the car, this is every guy's fantasy.

Notes

1. Eric Zurcher's catalogue of French CE3K cases gives the response as "*Energie*" which is admittedly less richly allusive than what appears in this English translation. I obviously prefer the use of the word Power here, but it does not fundamentally matter to the dream-car analogy. Zurcher types the case as a work of imagination and notes that a dossier exists that disputes the case. No confession is cited. *Les Apparitions d'Humanoides*, Editions Alain Lefevre, 1979, 173-174
2. Jimmy Guieu, *Flying Saucers come from Another World*, Hutchinson, 1956, 229-232
3. Melinda Leslie lecture notes. "If Not — Then Why All This?: The Military Harassment, Surveillance and Re-abduction of Alien Abductees: Evidence for the Reality of UFO Abductions", <http://www.militaryabduction.com/Main.htm>
4. *UFO Abductions: The Measure of a Mystery*, chapter 10, 205-207
5. Dennis Stacy and Patrick Huyghe, *The Field Guide to UFOs*, Quill, 2000, 46-47. For closer cases with such rim lights see ad plane IFO cases in Hendry's *UFO Handbook*, 92, 86. Obviously, though, the Blondeau saucer is not an ad plane. So, yet another wrinkle in the similarities = shared reality equation.
6. Kevin Randle, *The Roswell Encyclopedia*, Quill, 2000, 167-168
7. light: Truman Bethurum, *Aboard a Flying Saucer*, DeVorss, 1954, 42 - lite: Bethurum, 36
8. light: Charles Moody in Coral and Jim Lorenzen, *Abducted!*, Berkley Medallion, 1976, 43 - lite: Betty Andreasson in Raymond Fowler, *The Andreasson Affair*, Prentice-Hall, 1979, 174
9. light: Paul W. Fairman's short story "Brothers Beyond the Void", *Fantastic Adventures*, 14, 3, March 1952, 56-62 - lite: William Tenn, "Consulate" (1948), see "A Klassic Abduction Found", *The REALL News*, 9, 3, May 2001, 1, 6-7
10. light: *Star Trek*, "Return of the Archons" - lite: "The Cosmic Man" (1959)

LETTERS



We all have our own ideas of what constitutes good and bad UFO evidence or testimony. My own instinct is to reject any witness whose testimony consists of claims such as: "Officials made death threats if we talked about it" and "Remember, this meeting never took place . . ." Such remarks inhibit me from taking seriously any anecdotal evidence this witness offers thereafter.

Yet this kind of testimony has popped up time and again in ufology. One example was indirectly brought up at a recent conference where the speaker referred to the "Disclosure Project" press conference held by Dr Steven Greer in Washington last May. According to this speaker, the *Fortean Times* account of the said conference (in FT148, July 2001) was heavily biased and only mentioned the more, shall we say, extremist testimony, but omitted any mention of the evidence given by John Callahan, a former Federal Aviation Administration employee. The speaker called this omission "disgraceful", and earned a round of applause.

Callahan's testimony centred round an incident he was involved in, namely the radar/visual sighting by a Japanese airliner over Alaska in November 1986. I then looked at his testimony (as printed in *UFO Magazine*). In the course of it

Callahan claims that soon after the incident he attended a top level meeting which included "three men from Reagan's scientific staff, three CIA people, three FBI people and I don't remember who the other guys were, with all the FAA experts . . ." The purpose of this meeting was to decide what to tell the public. Callahan then testifies: "When it was all done one of the CIA men told the people they were now sworn to secrecy, that this meeting never happened and this event [the UFO incident] never happened." Of course everyone knows the incident indeed happened.

Callahan then relates: "Now I have told this story many times, and I get sometimes funny looks from people." And well he might, for if he was genuinely warned that the said meeting "never occurred" why was he telling people of this meeting at all? Why had he violated his oath of secrecy so quickly? Yet Callahan is, he claims, prepared to testify before Congress (assuming of course that Congress ever bothers to devote any time to this "Disclosure Project").

Is there a recorded case of anyone ever having been prosecuted for revealing either details of a UFO incident or an official meeting to discuss such an incident?

Christopher D. Allan, Stoke-on-Trent

Recently I finally got to see *Fire in the Sky*, which is based on the Travis Walton case. What struck me as truly unbelievable was not the UFO abduction, but what a weird lot of rednecks allegedly inhabit Arizona. Or were the earthbound sequences just Hollywood licence?

You have raised the question of why there are so few multiple-witness sightings. Though this is indeed a serious objection to nuts-and-bolts hypotheses, I think that the explanation is partly to do with the way sightings are reported or not reported. Some UFO sceptics appear to hold to the extraordinary notion that any UFO witness will necessarily make a report. In fact, over the years I have met a number of people with UFO experiences, which I learned about when the subject of ufology chanced to be raised. In no case had they reported to anyone, though one woman had written a letter to Tony Dodd which, however, she never sent. This suggests that most sightings are *not* reported.

In July last year a man living near Walthamstow Marshes in East London told me that he had seen a UFO at 8.50 pm on 27 June. It was a black coloured crescent with two red lights, hovering over a mobile phone aerial about a hundred yards from the living room window of his flat. He watched it for about a minute as it slowly rotated. The lights turned white and started flashing. The it shot off over a clump of trees on the marsh, and went out of sight.

There must have been dozens, perhaps hundreds of windows with a view of that mast, but I know of no other reports. Yet this does not necessarily mean that the UFO was not objective. Midway through a Wednesday evening most people would either have gone out or be watching television. Suppose that it was real and that a dozen people did see it. At least half of them would not bother to tell anyone (my informant, once again, only mentioned it to me after the topic happened to come up in conversation). Of those who did, one could guess what would occur. One would telephone the police and receive nothing but a caution for using the emergency line for a frivolous purpose. Another would write to the Ministry of Defence and get the standard brush-off letter that UFOs are of no defence significance. A third would write to London airport, who throw all such letters in the waste paper basket. A fourth would telephone the local paper, who might be interested, but in most cases are not. The remaining two would write to two separate UFO organisations. One of these, being understaffed, would not reply, while the other would send back a sighting report form. This, when completed, would be filed away and forgotten. There is no central co-ordination of reports, which usually are not available to the public.

It would be a possible but unenviable task to make door-to-door enquiries: that area is rather rough, and most people have barred metal gates in addition to the ordinary front door. A friend who recently did research for the transport planning authority tells me that the commonest response to ringing peoples' bells asking for information is to be told to go away (in much stronger words than that).

So there you have it. If there are multiple-witness sightings, then quite likely we shall never know about them.

Gareth J. Medway, London

**If you change your address
don't forget to inform the Editor.**

ODDS AND ENDS

Cruel hoax. Do you know that if you collect umpteen thousand Walkers crisp packets then this philanthropic firm will pay for expensive medical treatment for a sick or crippled child? Well, if you hear such a story from someone collecting crisp packets, tell them not to waste their time; it's just a "cruel hoax". This particular one has been doing the rounds for many years in Britain, and for some obscure reason, it is always Walkers crisps.

The latest victims are police officers in Plumstead, London, according to *The Sun* (27 October 2001). A man claiming to represent Walkers phoned the police station telling them that they knew of a boy suffering from leukaemia, and if they collected this boy's 6-stone weight in crisp packets the firm would pay to have him sent to the USA for treatment. Suspensions were aroused when a policeman's wife who is a school teacher asked her pupils to help and found that colleagues were already collecting for a different Walkers charity scheme.

So they finally did the obvious thing and checked with Walkers, who of course knew nothing of these schemes. Pc Mark Davies said: "I cannot believe some sicko would prey on people's feelings like this."

Silly names. Connoisseurs of silly names should turn their attention to the Japanese car industry. In the motoring supplement of *The Daily Telegraph* (27 October 2001) Mike Rutherford, inspired by his recent visit to the Tokyo Motor Show, gives a list of model names for cars.

He writes: "In the past, there have been some corkers: the Toyota Synus, Mitsubishi Dingo, Suzuki Alto Afternoon Tea, Toyota Country Boy and Deli Boy Supreme, Nissan Cedric and, my favourite, the Mitsubishi Lettuce."

This year's show included concept vehicles called: the Isuzu Begin Funky Box, Nissan Nails, Honda Life Dunk, Mazda Secret Hideout, Daihatsu Naked F, Toyota Cist and Suzuki Van Van.

Everyday cars on sale in Japan include: the Daihatsu Terios Kid, Honda Fit, Mazda Bongo Friender, Isuzu Big Horn, Mitsubishi Delica Space Gear, Nissan Datsun, Suzuki Every Landy and Toyota Sparky.

Silly excuses. A recent survey gathered information on reasons for absences for work. Most of them were the usual headaches and stomach upsets. However, "The survey found that excuses as bizarre as having a foot stuck in the toilet, having keys buried by the dog and getting abducted by aliens have been used by those desperate to avoid work." (*The Daily Telegraph*, 6 November 2001)



MAGONIA Readers' Meetings

First Sunday of each month, 1915-2230, at the Railway, Putney, opposite Putney station. If you live in or are visiting London, then come along and support the cause of pelicanist, noisy-negativist, armchair ufology, and research by proclamation.

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